



NOAA

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NOAA Fisheries Announces \$3.6 Million in Grants to States and Tribes to Support Threatened and Endangered Species Recovery

NOAA's National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) has announced \$3.6 million in grants through the Species Recovery Grant Program to assist 10 coastal states and two federally recognized tribes with conservation projects designed to recover marine mammals, sea turtles and fish species listed under the Endangered Species Act.

"This program is a key mechanism for implementing high priority recovery actions for threatened and endangered species," said Sam Rauch, NOAA Fisheries Acting Administrator. "NOAA Fisheries has a long-standing commitment to supporting the conservation efforts of our partner state and tribal agencies who work with us to restore species that are vital to our nation's economy, environment and heritage."

Eleven proposals were chosen from a pool of 29 applications submitted by states, and two proposals were selected from a pool of six applications submitted by federally recognized tribes. The combined request from all applications totaled more than \$11 million in federal support in fiscal year 2013.

Authorized under Section 6 of the Endangered Species Act and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act, the Species Recovery Grants Program supports management, research and outreach efforts designed to bring listed species to the point where ESA protections are no longer necessary.

The 13 projects selected are listed below with the total amount of federal funding approved for each award, and the portion of federal support provided this fiscal year. Each project requires several years to complete, as well as additional funding. Funding for additional years is contingent on future appropriations and satisfactory progress of the work planned.

- 1) Alaska Department of Fish and Game (\$1,385,410; \$527,810): Identifying the level and prevalence of mercury and organochlorine contamination in the endangered western **Steller sea lion** population to assess potential links between continued declines and anthropogenic contaminant sources.
- 2) Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (\$822,715; \$248,855): Expanding research and conservation efforts benefiting all five species of **sea turtles** occurring in Florida's waters: loggerheads (*Caretta caretta*), hawksbills (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), green turtles (*Chelonia mydas*), Kemp's ridleys (*Lepidochelys kempii*), and leatherbacks (*Dermochelys coriacea*).
- 3) Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission (\$605,384; \$201,594): Collecting data on fine-scale habitat use by juvenile **smalltooth sawfish** (*Pristis pectinata*) and their responses to varying freshwater inflow. Data will inform management decisions regarding minimum flows and levels for rivers, maximum discharge regulations from Lake Okeechobee, dissolved oxygen criteria, hardened shoreline criteria, and oyster restoration strategies.

- 4) Georgia Department of Natural Resources & South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (\$1,623,962; \$368,610, Georgia/ \$135,670, South Carolina): Supporting a multi-state genetic mark-recapture project for **loggerhead sea turtles** (*Caretta caretta*) to estimate population size of nesting females annually and assess population status, characterize threats, and develop management strategies to assist the recovery of loggerhead sea turtles.
- 5) Hawaii Department of Land and Natural Resources (\$964,443; \$22,000): Preventing and documenting incidents of **Hawaiian monk seal** (*Monachus schauinslandi*) and **green sea turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*) disturbance by beach-goers and other ocean users; improving public support, understanding, and participation in “seal friendly” and “turtle friendly” practices; designing and conducting a pilot, shoreline, recreational fishery observer program; and drafting a joint State-Federal Hawaiian green turtle population assessment and monitoring protocol.
- 6) Maine Department of Marine Resources (\$1,027,754; \$548,304): Supporting the removal of the first migratory barrier on the Penobscot River, the Veazie Dam, to open 100% of the historic habitat for endangered **shortnose sturgeon** (*Acipenser brevirostrum*) and threatened **Atlantic sturgeon** (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) as well as help restore 11 species of sea-going fishes, including endangered **Atlantic salmon** (*Salmo salar*).
- 7) Makah Tribe (\$349,837; \$100,000): Monitoring the health, distribution and vital rates of culturally important marine mammals, including **Steller sea lions** and **gray whales**.
- 8) Maryland Department of Natural Resources & Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries (\$1,751,437; \$114,717, Maryland/ \$340,487, Virginia): Pursuing a series of research objectives to improve understanding of habitat use by both sub-adult and juvenile **Atlantic sturgeon** (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) within the Chesapeake Bay, involving bay-wide collaboration with the state agencies, NOAA Fisheries, U.S. Fish and Wildlife and the U.S. Navy.
- 9) Puerto Rico Department of Natural and Environmental Resources (\$187,585; \$63,400): Conducting in-water sea turtle surveys and analyses of **hawksbill** (*Eretmochelys imbricata*) and **green turtle** (*Chelonia mydas*) population dynamics for important foraging areas in Puerto Rican coastal waters to inform implementation of recovery plans.
- 10) South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (\$825,175; \$316,495): Monitoring the temporal and spatial distribution of **Atlantic sturgeon** (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) to fill data gaps regarding use of important shelf habitat by this species in U.S. territorial waters off South Carolina and Georgia.
- 11) South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (\$198,132; \$107,663): Examining the genetic relationship of **Atlantic sturgeon** (*Acipenser oxyrinchus oxyrinchus*) in North and South Carolina river systems. There is currently a lack of sufficient data to resolve the relationships among these two river systems, calculate effective population size, and evaluate the current genetic health, stability, and adaptive potential of these Atlantic sturgeon populations.
- 12) Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife (\$924,961; \$402,829): Strengthening **southern resident killer whale** (*Orcinus orca*) protection by conducting public outreach and education, proactive law enforcement, vessel monitoring, and statistical evaluation of the effectiveness of the new vessel regulations.

- 13) Wiyot Tribe (\$267,709; \$100,000): Filling critical data gaps regarding the status of **green sturgeon** in the Eel River of northern California by determining population origin, spawning and summer habitat use.

Applications for the next grant cycle will be accepted starting August 1, 2013. For more information about Species Recovery Grants, the review and selection process, and past awards, please visit: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/states/> and <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/pr/conservation/tribes.htm>.

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